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ABSTRACT

Chattanooga State Technical Community College (CSTCC), in Tennessee, offers distance learning courses through Instructional Television Fixed Service (ITFS) broadcast, through broadcasts of a local public television affiliate station, and through video cassette checkout/mailout. By the end of fiscal year 1991-92, over 2,500 students had enrolled in the college's 49 distance learning courses. The majority of them were working adults seeking degrees or specialized training, students planning to transfer to four-year institutions, and homebound students or other shut-ins. Of the distance learning courses, 7 were taught by ITFS, 6 were broadcast over public television, and 36 were delivered through videocassettes. CSTCC's experience suggests that the following factors are crucial to a successful distance education program: involving faculty in program development; training faculty in instructional telecommunications; allowing faculty to practice with live interactive distance teaching; providing faculty with support, released time, and other resources; humanizing outreach to students through the use of letters and phone calls; giving prompt feedback to students; and providing students with special help with problematic assignments. In surveys of CSTCC's distance learners, 89.2% were either satisfied or very satisfied with the course, and between 93% and 98% rated instruction as adequate to excellent. Since 1985, 63.4% of CSTCC's distance learners successfully completed their courses. For the last 2 fiscal years, the college's distance learning program has generated three dollars for every dollar spent. (PAA)

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Developing and Managing a Multi-Modal Distance Learning Program in the Two-Year College

Sue Y. Hyatt

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DEVELOPING AND MANAGING A MULTI-MODAL DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAM IN THE TWO-YEAR COLLEGE

A presentation made at the 1992 Annual International Conference on Teaching Excellence and Conference of Administrators
Austin, Texas

While distance learning via print-based correspondence courses is celebrating its one-hundredth anniversary in 1992, many educational institutions are just beginning to become involved in exciting new developments in distance education. Across the globe some 10,000,000 people study at a distance each year, according to the International Council for Distance Education, and in the United States in 1990 over 500,000 persons were enrolled in telecourses, the integrated packages of video, print, and administrative materials being produced by institutions such as Coast Community College Consortium and Dallas Community College District and distributed by the PBS Adult Learner Service. However, a 1991 report of a survey by Ron Brey indicates that within the next five years 83% of the colleges he surveyed for the Instructional Telecommunications Consortium of the AACJC will have distance learning programs. (His survey covered 368 of the 1244 institutions of higher education in America today.)

WHY HAVE A DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAM?

Dee Brock, a vice-president at PBS and a pioneer developer of telecourses, has stated that the purpose of distance learning is to provide learning opportunities for adults who would otherwise remain unserved or underserved by higher education. Most of the present and future distance learners will be served by two-year colleges who view reaching people at a distance from the campus as part of their mission. Nationwide, the population of distance learners is made up of rural persons, the unemployed and underemployed, workers seeking upgraded job skills or specialized training, retired or active duty military personnel, retirees, and underprepared students. Distance learners at Chattanooga State Technical Community College mirror these same enrollment trends. However, the majority are working adults seeking degrees or specialized training, students planning to transfer to four-year institutions and homebound mothers or other shut-ins.

Surveys reveal that Chattanooga State students take courses through any of the college's four delivery systems because of convenience, personal constraints, flexibility of time, distance to campus and cost savings. Students enrolled in this program may live as far away as 60 miles, reside in a different time zone, work full-time and manage families, and have per capita incomes less than $12,000. Being able to take courses in their home or community represents a great savings in time, energy and travel expense.

The Distance Learning Program offers advantages to the college as well. In many cases, students may be able to take courses through this arrangement when they could not otherwise enroll. Others are

able to take full loads by combining on-campus classwork, labs or clinic practicums and distance learning courses when they would otherwise be part-time students. Since state funding is based on full-time equivalence, these courses currently generate additional state funds as well as tuition for the college. Lastly, because the college has doubled its student enrollment in last five years, these courses offer an avenue for continued growth which does not impact limited physical space.

WHAT TECHNOLOGIES ARE USED?

The following chart illustrates current and projected delivery systems nationwide:

MODE	1991	1994
PTV	63%	67%
EDUCATIONAL CABLE	49%	63%
VIDEOTAPE IN LIBRARIES	75%	80%
VIDEOTAPE CHECKOUT	43%	59%
ITFS	16%	18%
COMMERCIAL TV	8%	9%
LOW POWER TV	4%	10%

(Ron Brey, U.S. POSTSECONDARY DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAMS IN THE 1990S: A DECADE OF GROWTH, a research project of the Instructional Telecommunications Consortium/AACJC)

Chattanooga State provides distance learning courses through ITFS broadcast, broadcast through the local PBS affiliate station, and through videocassette checkout/mailout. In 1992/93 the college expects to add broadcasts over the local cable public access channel. Over the past three years, the videocassette checkout/mailout option has been preferred by a ratio of 3:1 over the ITFS option and by a ratio of 6:1 over PTV broadcast. By the end of fiscal 1991/92 over 2500 persons had enrolled in 49 distance learning courses: seven taught by ITFS each semester, six broadcast via PBS affiliate, and thirty-six delivered by video checkout/mailout.

Of courses delivered through the checkout/mailout option, fifteen telecourses were leased through PBS and twenty-one were locally recorded and produced courses. Seven live interactive courses were broadcast during each semester. Courses broadcast via the PBS telecasts were all leased and represented only three additional licensed courses.

Chattanooga State is currently adding two supporting technologies for its distance learning courses. Beginning in the fall of 1992, students will be able to communicate with instructors from their homes or office via a computer bulletin board as well as through an audioconferencing arrangement. We feel that these additions will greatly enhance the sense of connection between these students and their instructors.

WHAT ARE IMPERATIVES FOR DISTANCE EDUCATORS?

Our experience has shown that these factors are crucial to success:

1) Faculty MUST be involved with the process of development or adaptation. At Chattanooga State the Director of Distance Learning works with division heads, department heads, and interested faculty to identify potential new courses and contracts with faculty to develop or adapt materials for a new course. When work is completed, the department which will offer the course reviews and approves the work before the course is offered.
2) Faculty should be trained for best use of instructional telecommunications equipment and should be briefed about common potential problems and how to handle them.
3) Faculty need time to practice for live interactive distance teaching.
4) FACULTY MUST HAVE GOOD SUPPORT. Such support might include extra pay for course development, support staff to handle "nitty gritty," release time to prepare materials and recognition at evaluation time for work performed. At Chattanooga State, the Learning Resources Center attends to all the mailing in and out, scores objective tests, keeps track of student progress, and sends out reminders about important deadlines at regular intervals.

WHAT ARE IMPERATIVES FOR DISTANCE LEARNERS?

Distance Learners, even more than traditional learners, must have instructors who care about student learning. Michael Moore and Melody Thompson (ACSDE Research Monograph) say that these students need instructors who:

1) Use humanizing techniques, such as sending out introductory letters or phone calls to let students know there is someone they can reach with questions or concerns.
2) Encourage participation through regular interchange, such as letters, phone calls and audioconferences.
3) Have an inviting message style.
4) Give prompt, helpful feedback, which is essential to keeping students working.
5) Provide help with assignments that may be problematic.

Chattanooga State's experience has supported Moore and Thompson's conclusions, and we have found a striking correlation between the speed and quality of feedback on assignments and the final grade achieved by students in a course. Not surprisingly, those students who were told in a timely and friendly manner about both their strengths and weaknesses on examinations and other assignments persisted in the course to completion almost three times as often as students who received little feedback or feedback which was given in a neutral or unfriendly manner.

DOES DISTANCE LEARNING WORK?

Moore and Thompson state "The weight of evidence points overwhelmingly to the conclusion that teaching or studying at a distance, especially using interactive electronic media, is effective, when effectiveness in measured by achievement of learning, attitudes of students and teachers and cost effectiveness."

An analysis of student success in distance learning courses at Chattanooga State since 1985 shows that on average 63.4% of distance learners successfully completed their courses (achieving grades of A-D). Success rates for each media were:

ITFS	81.6%
PBS BROADCAST	53.0%
VIDEO CHECKOUT	50.3%

While these statistics may seem low, the success rate for correspondence courses nationwide has been reported to be 30%. Further, of 4494 students enrolled from 1985 to 1992, 1652 took at least two distance learning courses, and some learners took as many as fourteen distance learning courses.

Attitudes of students responding to a survey about their experience in distance learning showed that:

1) 80.4% felt they had gained as much information as they would have in a traditional on-campus class.
2) 89.2% were either satisfied or very satisfied with the course.
3) 93-98% rated instruction as adequate to excellent.
4) 75.5 - 84.9% rated the experience as good to excellent.

There was a small difference in perception between media, with ITFS being most highly rated. Only 4.1% viewed the experience as less than adequate.

In terms of teacher attitudes, currently requests to develop courses are now originating in academic departments as opposed to program staff members' initiating development project. Faculty have begun to see the advantages of including these courses as part of their teaching load. Although they are required to maintain a set number of office hours to serve these students, they are relieved from the pressure of daily preparation and class attendance. Further, pairing typically low-enrollment courses with these courses may allow instructors to offer the less popular courses more often.

While the cost of establishing a distance learning program, particularly one involving heavy technology such as an ITFS system, may seem high, Chattanooga State's experience has shown that the program has been highly productive. For the last two fiscal years the program has enrolled approximately 10% of the total headcount for the college and has generated FTE funds and tuition at a ratio of three dollars gained for each dollar spent on the program. Moreover, the program has allowed for continued growth when the on-campus

facilities were severely overtaxed. As a result, the college has supported the program enthusiastically. Based on the indicators of student satisfaction, faculty acceptance and administrative support, Chattanooga State's distance learning program is likely to continue to expand to serve increasing numbers of students in its service region. We think that other colleges will find a distance learning program can benefit them as well.